

There were, however, parts of the Scriptures actually translated. The Psalms at least had been rendered into English. But hitherto no English translation of the whole Bible had been made. The Anglo-Saxon version, of which copies were transcribed as late as the twelfth century, was of small use in the fourteenth, when there were probably fewer people who understood the language of Alfred and Dunstan than there are to-day. French Bibles, however, were at the service of those of the upper class who could read them, and Wycliffe spoke with envy of such greater enlightenment.

\* Also the worthy realm of France, notwithstanding all lettings, hath translated the Bible and the Gospels with other true sentences of doctors out of Latin into French. Why shoulden not Englishmen do so ? As lords in England have the Bible in French, so it were not against reason, that they hadden the same sentence in English.' These words were written some time in the later seventies.<sup>1</sup> Before many years had gone by an English translation of the whole Bible was in existence. It is generally known as the Wycliffe Bible, and has been till quite lately universally attributed to the Reformer. Whether he or another man was the author of that particular translation, he certainly translated some parts of the Scriptures, and used every means in his power to bring about the study of the Bible in English by all Englishmen. In this effort the friars were his continual opponents. The sort of religious influence that they exerted over the people, was more consonant with old Church traditions than with the new religion based on each individual's interpretation of Scripture. They were, besides, the rivals of Wycliffe's itinerant priests in every village and market town throughout the Midlands. As their enemies attempted to

spread Scripture knowledge, the friars naturally attempted to suppress it. The Bishops, on the other hand, sometimes gave license to possess English Bibles. Yet, if the Bible was meant for everybody, why was leave to possess it required? Even nuns might not have English versions, unless they\* had license thereto/<sup>2</sup> Some rich and powerful men possessed translations of the Scriptures with the goodwill of the Church

<sup>1</sup> Matt., 429-30.

\* See Ap.